I/O

The Latrobe Valley Computer Users Group Newsletter

December 1991/January 1992

Issue No. 13

e Latrobe Valley Computer Users Group is open to all interested in Personal Computing, from absolute beginners to experts. You don't ed to own a computer to join. Family membership is $10 per year. For more information, ring (051) 76 6199 BH, 74 1605 AH.

Merry Christmas to all Members!

Input/Output is the publication of the Latrobe Valley Computer Users Group. It is published monthly.

Members are encouraged to contribute material for the Newsletter, in ASCII format, if possible. It can be uploaded to a BBS ((051) 22 2122) or submitted to the editor at 12 Clift St., Traralgon 3844 (Phone 76 1730). "Letters to the Editor" should be posted to the same address.

We accept classified advertisements for inclusion in the classified section. There will be no charge to members for ads of a noncommercial nature. Commercial ads will be accepted for a nominal charge (see Classified page for more information), and the advertiser must state clearly the expected remuneration for any products or services offered. The Latrobe Valley Computer Users Group does not endorse or recommend any products or services included in commercial classified advertisements.

Please note that material published in the Newsletter represents the opinions of the authors, and does not carry the endorsement of the Newsletter Editor or the Latrobe Valley Computer Users Group.

PHONE HELP

Some members of the LVCUG have offered to assist other members with PC related problems over the telephone (evenings, please). They are:

Phil Carter	22 2382
Paul Dzwonkowski	63 1504
Ralph Edgar	74 0987
Graeme Matheson	74 9419
Trevor Smith (Apple)	34 4332
Martin Taylor	76 1730

The Latrobe Valley Computer Users Group is a non-profit organisation formed to promote the usage and understanding of Personal Computers. It is open to all age groups and does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, creed, or national origin.

The Group meets monthly on the last Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Traralgon Senior Citizens Club building, corner of Princes Hwy. and Whittaker's Rd. (Victory Park), Traralgon. Meetings are open to the public.

Family membership is $10 per year. This entitles members to receive the monthly Newsletter by mail, as well as the right to use the Group's "Help Lines". We request a donation of $2 each meeting per family to help cover costs (venue fees, coffee and tea, etc.).

To join now, send your name, address, phone number and a $10 cheque payable to the Latrobe Valley Computer Users Group to:

P.O. Box 67
Yinnar, Vic. 3869

For more information, ring 74 6199 BH, 76 1730 AH.

The Committee of Management Consists of the Following:

Phil Carter..........................President

Martin Taylor...........Vice President

Theresa Tate.....................Secretary

Paul Dzwonkowski.....Asst. Secretary

Graeme Matheson.............Treasurer

Sheryl Taylor........Newsletter Editor

Ross Cheater....Committee Member

Jenny Poon.......Committee Member

From The Editor's Desk

Well, it's that time of year again, the season to be jolly... It can't be Christmas time already! The years seem to be going by more and more rapidly. Must be my advancing age, as I remember how *slowly* my 17th year passed when I was waiting to be eligible for my driver's licence... Oh well.

It's time to start thinking of what to get people again. I had enough trouble *last* year. It makes it a bit easier when relatives buy their own computers, as no matter what accessories/peripherals/games, etc., anyone has, there is always something else they could use.

I was down at Latrobe Valley Computers the other day to get some ideas. They sell mouses (mice?) for $29.95, and they have the new Stealth Fighter, Gunship 2000 and Leisure Suit Larry 5.

Over at K-Mart, they have the occasional disk specials, and the "van" disk boxes for $10, when they have them in stock (they are the ones that look like the Japanese high-speed trains). You have to keep your eyes open for them.

Target sells cheap computer desks, which you assemble yourself with a screwdriver. They are on special quite often, when they put out their catalogs. Then, they are $99. Target also sells the shelves, printer stands, and file cabinets to match the desks.

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Next month, it will be time to nominate for LVCUG Committee positions. Last year, our membership was substantially smaller and one person was nominated for each position. Thus, the "winners" won by default.

This year, however, I expect it to be more of a contest. I will not be nominating for Newsletter Editor again, so that position is open to whomever may wish to nominate for it. They can use whatever program they like to produce it, and will commence publishing it for the March '92 issue. Also, Marty will be retiring as Vice President, so that position is open as well. I don't know what the plans of the other Committee members are at this stage.

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I am currently organising the use of the 3TR Community Information Booth at Midvalley Plaza in Morwell to promote the Group. I am hoping to get a couple of Saturdays in January and February. Anyone who wishes to come down and help out is welcome.

Well, have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Vice President's Report

We have come to the end of our first full year of existence. A lot of water has passed under the bridge since then. We have seen our membership grow from an initial 20 odd members to over 100. We have a regular meeting place, a couple of SIGs, one PC, (soon to have two), and a newsletter that has grown from one typewritten sheet to Newsmaster to the excellent Jetsetter.

I'd like the thank the following people for their invaluable help during the year:

Theresa Tate for managing the shareware library, organising the incorporation of the Group, the DOS classes at the Neighbourhood House which has provided us with funds, for the use of her HP Laserjet printer to produce the photo ready copy of the newsletters and other printing requirements and the securing of the Senior Citz' Clubrooms for meetings.

Paul Dzwonkowski for his assistance in the DOS classes, his organising the disk purchases and the management of the membership lists.

Phil Carter for his presiding over meetings and the other attendant duties the presidentship provides.

Sheryl Taylor for her wholehearted effort in producing the newsletters and their continued improvement and the running around to various organisations to promote the Group.

Graeme Matheson for his good efforts in keeping the Group's finances on balance and for his invaluable help in copying the newsletters.

Jenny Poon for making available to the Programmers SIG the Neighbourhood House for meetings, and the occasional assistance with the newsletter.

Tony Dieck from Latrobe Valley Computers for the copies of Publish It! and other programmes that we needed, and for the access to his Deskjet for printing of the newsletter.

And finally, to those members who contributed articles for the newsletter. They may have been few in number, but the quality was high.

Let's hope that more of you can contribute more to the newsletter. After all, it is the lifeblood of the Group. It is the one thing that keeps all of us in touch with what is going on.

As Sheryl has pointed out in her editorial, she will not be standing for the Newsletter Editor position next year. I, however will re-nominate, but for an ordinary committee member position only. The Vice President's position will become vacant.

Well, that's it for '91. I hope all of you have a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year. See you in '92.■

- Martin Taylor

Software Review : *Publish It!*

I was recently in the position of handling the newsletter while Sheryl was overseas. In that time, I was able to get a new Desktop Publishing (DTP) programme called Publish It! from Tony Dieck, of Latrobe Valley Computers, for assessment and possible publication of future newsletters. It was Version One and like all first run programs, it has its limitations. When Version Two arrived Tony graciously lent it to me to try out.

Publish It! is easy to use, having the popular GEM Graphic User Interface (GUI, which is yet ANOTHER current buzzword) with pulldown menus, and an on-line help feature. In appearance it is very similar to Ventura Publisher.

The programme can be used without a mouse, but it is very awkward to do so. With a mouse, however, navigating about the program is a breeze.

Publish It! comes on 8 360kb disks, not all which is used. Most have fonts and printer drivers for the large number of printers it supports, from 9 pin Stars to HP Laserjets. When installed, the whole programme, including sample documents and graphics files (.IMG) takes up about 1.3 megabytes.

Installation

To install Publish It! is merely a matter of placing the number one Master Disk in drive A or B, logging the drive and typing INSTALL. From there, the installation process will prompt you for the type of monitor, graphics card and printer, and asking you to place the appropriate disks in the default drive. It takes about 5 - 10 minutes to install and comes with sample documents to begin practising on right away.

Compatibilities

Publish It! can import documents created from word processors such as Word Perfect Ver 4 and 5.xx, Wordstar, Word Writer, MS Word and even plain ASCII files. It also can import graphics files such as PCX (Paintbrush), IMG files from Ventura Publisher and TIFF files. However, it cannot import GIF files, which is a pity. But there are utils about that can convert these.

Creating Documents

When creating a document, we have to make what is called a Style Sheet. This contains information about the types of text, hyphenation and other details related to paragraph layouts and so on. Publish It! comes with a number of ready made style sheets which can be edited and saved to separate styles.

Once this is done, we then have to create frames on the screen into which the text of the document and any graphics will go. Again quite easy to do, using the mouse. Any graphics imported can be cropped, edited and their size changed to suit the document layout. They can be plopped in the middle of existing text, which will wrap around the picture in the same manner as magazines and newspapers do with photos.

Selected text can be altered to sharpen its appearance, such as italicised or underlined, or whole paragraphs can be changed. Publish It! also has a drawing feature which is handy, but not as powerful as, say, PC Paintbrush. It also has an built in text editor, but it doesn't have a spell checker. But this only means the word processor the text is created in would have to be used in this regard.

When the basic document is created, it can be saved automatically at whatever intervals you select, in case of the unforseen power failure at the most crucial point in time. Once the document is created, it is saved to a file with a .DTP extension. Unlike some other Desktop Publishers, it doesn't need the various graphics files or text files to be saved with it. They are loaded directly into the document. This way, if you wish to create the newsletter on one machine and print it out elsewhere, provided the other person has Publish It! on their PC, all you need to take there is the one .DTP file. Usually, for a 5 page newsletter, as I made, it is about 160kb in size, not large at all.

Files and Flexibility

You don't need to keep all your graphics files, etc., on the hard disk. Publish It! will allow you to load document files or graphics files from floppies if disk space is at a premium, as most is. Its file manager is very easy to use.

Problems

I had problems with the early version of Publish It! in that it wouldn't print from my NEC Powermate AT. I couldn't figure it out. I tried different printers and different PCs. On other PCs, fine, but not mine, no matter what printer was attached. I was rather disappointed with it until I got Version Two. It worked fine on my PC, but it wasn't until I read through the later version's manual I found the cause. My PC has a Phoenix BIOS and depending on the version of the BIOS, Publish It! may not work properly. Thus Version One didn't like my BIOS. Also, version One has memory restriction, meaning large documents won't print. I created one over 500 Kb in size and the programme locked up when I tried to print to document. Version Two doesn't seem to have these restrictions. Or at least, so far it hasn't.

Version two had no problems with the BIOS, but didn't care for my printer, as it is an older model.

Conclusion

In summing up, Publish It! is a full featured Desk top publishing programme costing less than a third of the likes of Ventura Publisher and Aldus Pagemaker, the two benchmarks of DTP. It is easy to use and not disk space hungry. It's ideal for club newsletters and the like.▪

- Martin Taylor.

Publish It! Ver. 2 retails for $300. Review copy courtesy of Tony Dieck, Latrobe Valley Computers, 45 Hotham St, Traralgon. Ph. 051-74 8539

The Rogue's Concise Computer Dictionary

Advanced: (adj.) doesn't work yet, but it's pretty close. See: *Bug, Glitch* .

Analyst: (n.) one who writes programs and doesn't trust them. A cynic.

Assembler: (n.) a minor program of interest only to obsessed programmers.

BASIC: (n.) a computer one-word oxymoron.

BBS: (n.) a system fo connecting computers and exchanging gossip, facts, and most of all playing games.

Benchmark: (n.) a test written ostensibly to compare hardware or software, but actually used by manufacturers to misinterpret or quote out of context in advertisements.

Binary: (n.) a two-valued logic especially susceptible to glitches and bugs. It originated as a way of counting on the thumbs, since programming managers usually find fingers far too confusing. See: *Hexadecimal, Octal* .

Bug: (n.) any program feature not yet described to the marketing department.

Bus: (n.) a connector you pluf money into, something like a slot machine.

Byte: (n.) eight bits, or one dollar (in 1950 terms). Presently worth about two-tenths of a cent and falling fast.

C: (n.) the language following A and B. The world still awaits D and E. By Z, it may be acceptable for general use.

Chip: (n.) a stylized picture of a logic diagram on refined and alloyed sand. See: *glitch, bug* .

COBOL: (n.) an old computer language, designed to be *read* and not run. Unfortunately, it is often run anyway.

Code: (n.) a means of concealing bugs favored by programmers. (v.) the process of concealing bugs by programming.

Cookie: (n.) any recondite message displayed by a time-shared system. the message is not often seen, because it only appears when the system is operating properly. Common cookies include the timeless "Murphy was an optimist" and "When in danger or in doubt, run in circles, scream and shout."

Copy Protection: (n.) a means of circumventing various rights granted by the Constitution so as to artificially inflate profits.

CPU: (n.) acronym for Central Purging Unit. A device which discards or distorts data sent to it, sometimes returning more data and sometimes merely overheating.

Crash: (v.) to terminate a program in the usual fashion, i.e. by locking up the computer or setting a fire at the printer. (n.) the process of such termination.

Data: (n.) raw information, esp. that supplied to the central purging unit for transformation and disposal.

Data Base Manager: (n.) any fast filing system which gives misleading answers. Also see: *Menu,* Bug.

Diagnostic: (n.) a test foolishly but often believed to determine the reason for a particular failure. Competent professionals prefer the I Ching or phrenology.

Digital: (adj.) of or pertaining to the fingers, esp. to counting on them. See: *Binary, Hexadecimal,* Octal.

Documentation: (n.) a novel sold with software, designed to entertain the operator during episodes of bugs or glitches.

DOS: (n.) Acronym. A program which outputs questions given answers, putting users in Jeopardy.

Emulate: (v.) to simulate hardware glitches with software bugs. Emulator: (n.) a program which emulates. See: *Virtual* .

Engineer: (v.) to build something with bugs (software) or glitches (hardware). (n.) One who engineers.

Format: (v.) to erase irrevocably and unintentionally. (n.) The process of such erasure.

Forth: (n.) a stack-oriented programming language written right to left and read from bottom to top. It runs efficently on no common computers and is written effectively by no common programmers.

FORTRAN: (n.) an ancient programming language which changed IF's to GOTO's by using a strange three-valued logic on binary computers.

Glitch: (n.) an undocumented design feature, esp. of hardware.

GOTO: (n.) an efficient and general way of controlling a program, much despised by academics and others whose brains have been ruined by overexposure to Pascal. See: *Pascal* .

Hard Disk: (n.) a rapidly spinning platter divided into sectors. See: *Sector, Glitch, Bug* .

Hardware: (n.) anything prone to physical failure.

Head: (n.) the part of a disk drive which detects sectors and decides which of the two possible values to return: 'lose a turn' or 'bankrupt.'

Hexadecimal: (adj.) of or referring to base-16 numbers - binary numbers grouped four digits at a time so as to quadruple the opportunity for glitches and bugs. Originated as a means of counting on the fingers of one hand, using the thumb for the 'carry.' Purists who don't like to use the thumb at all prefer 'octal.' See: *Octal, Binary* .

Icon: (n.) a complex, blurry, and easily-misinterpreted pictorial representation of a single unambigious word. Preferred by illiterates and semiliterates for these reasons, and by others because it slows most computers down so even a cretin with an IQ of.53 may justly feel superior.

Increment: (v.) to increase by one, except when segments are used; then, the increase may be by sixteen unless word mode addressing is used in which case the increase is by one or two, depending on the processor and whether the address is on an even boundary or such increase causes an overflow exception processor fault, which may either cause the program to crash or decrease by a large number instead of increase, depending the register used and the operation being attempted.

Iterate: (v.) to repeat an action for a potentially and often actually infinite number of times.

Joystick: (n.) a device essential for performing business tasks and training exercises esp. favored by pilots, tank commanders, riverboat gamblers, and medieval warlords.

K: (n., adj.) a binary thousand, which isn't a decimal thousand or even really a binary thousand (which is eight), but is the binary number closest to a decimal thousand. This has proven so completely confusing that is has become a standard.

Kernal: (n.) a misspelling of 'kernel' used by beginning (funtionally illiterate) programmers, especially those with some knowledge of C.

Kernel: (n.) the core of a program, i.e. the source of all errors. Thus the common misspelling, 'kernal.'

Keyboard: (n.) a device used by programmers to write software for a mouse or joystick and by operators for playing games such as 'word processing.'

Kludge: (v., adj., or n.) to fix a program in the usual way.

Leading Edge: (n., adj.) anything which uses advanced technology. See: *Advanced*.

License: (n.) a covenant which tells the buyer that nothing has been purchased and that no refund, support, advice, or instruction may be anticipated and that no resale is permitted. A modern way of saying "Thanks for all your money and goodbye," far less crude than "Stick 'em up" but even more effective since the purchaser will often borrow the funds requested.

Logic: (n.) a system of determining truth or falsity, implication or exclusion, by means of a sort of binary Oneiromancy.

Loop: (n., v.) 1. aseries of instructions to be iterated. 2. the process of iterating them. Most loops ar unintentional and can be quite droll.

Macro: (n.) a series of keystrokes used to simulate a missing but essential command.

Megabyte: (n.) more than you can comprehend and less than you'll need. See: *UNIX*.

Megahertz: (n.) a way of measuring how well your computer matches the frequency of your local television channels. Most computers perform exceptionally well on this test, especially the higher-quality foreign-made ones.

Menu: (n.) any list of choices, each of which is either unsatisfactory or in some fashion contradictory.

Micro-: (prefix) anything both very small and very expensive.

Mode: (n.) a way of forcing glitch or bug.

Modem: (n., v.) a device used to connect computers (see: *BBS*) or the process of transmitting data between or among computers, esp. for those unable or unwilling to speak.

Monitor: (n.) a sort of television with exceptionally poor picture quality and limited to a single very local station.

Motherboard: (n.) the hardware version of the software 'kernel.'

Mouse: (n.) an input device used by management to force computer users to keep at least a part of their desks clean.

Nano-: (prefix) a thousandth of a thousandth, but not a binary thousandth in either case. Decimal is used for all very small measurements since no further confusion is necessary.

Octal: (n.) a base-8 counting system designed so that one hand may count upon the fingers of the other. Thumbs are not used, and the index finger is reserved for the 'carry.'

Offset: (n.) a method which permits access to any memory location in thousands of ways, each of which appears different but is not. Used with segments. See: *Segment*.

Operator: (n.) 1. One who has no experience with computers. 2. Any beginner, esp. one part of whose salary is paid in soft drinks and processed salted food treated with dangerous and illegal drugs or preservatives. Differs from a programmer in that a programmer will often take the dangerous and illegal drugs or preservatatives directly.

Pascal: (n.) a classroom project which was released before it could be graded - probably a good idea, considering. One wishes the University had had a better system of academic controls.

Patch: (v.) to fix a program by changing bytes according to the rules of logic. (n.) Any repair of this form.

Pirate: (v., n.) to steal software, or one who is such a thief. True pirates see nothing wrong with thievery, having successfully forgotten or repressed all moral values.

Pop: (v.) to remove from an area of memory naively thought to be the stack in a futile attempt to keep a program running.

Portable: (adj.) that which can be physically moved more than a hundred yards by an unaided olympic athlete without permanent damage to that individual more than 50% of the time.

Printer: (n.) a small box attached to a computer and used to start fires in cold weather.

Procedure: (n.) a method of performing a program sub-task in an inefficient way by extensively using the stack instead of a GOTO. See: *Pascal* and *C*.

Processor: (n.) a device for converting sense to nonsense at the speed of electricity, or (rarely) the reverse.

Program: (n.) that which manipulates symbols rapidly with unforseen results. Also: a bug's way of perpetuating bugs.

Programmer: (n.) 1. one who writes programs and trusts them. An optimist. 2. Any employee who needs neither food nor sleep but exixts on large quantities of caffeine, nicotine, sucrose, and machine-vended preservatives thinly disguised as foodstuffs.

Programming Language: (n.) a shorthand way of describing a series of bugs to a computer or a programmer.

Prompt: (n.) a computer request for a random operator error. Also a game where the computer plays the part of Vanna White and the operator, a contestant. There are no prizes for winning.

Push: (v.) to put into an area of memory believed to be the stack for the ostensible purpose of later retrieval. Tonkin's rule: In any program there are always more 'pushes' than 'pops.' See: *Recursion*.

Quantum leap: (adj.) literally, to move by the smallest amount theoretically possible. In advertising, to move by the largest leap imaginable (in the mind of the advertiser). There is no contradiction.

Recursion: (n.) a programming method which tests the limits of available memory in an iterative way by using the stack. When the program fails, all memory has been used. Memorize this definition, then see: Recursion.

Register: (n.) a part of the central purging unit used to distort or destroy incoming data by arbitrary rules. See: *Increment*.

Relational: (adj.) purchased from, or sold to, blood kin. See: *True relational*.

Sector: (n.) a disk arc on which is inscribed 'lose a turn' or 'bankrupt.' See: *Hard disk, Head, Glitch*.

Segment: (n.) a way of restricting or complicating access to memory in an attempt to break a programmer's will to live. Outlawed by both the A.S.P.C.A and the U.N. but still practiced in some backward areas of the world. See: Offset.

Software: (n.) anything other than hardware. That which hardware manufacturers can blame can blame for physical failures.

Sort: (v.) to order a list of data in such a way as to destroy all relationships between the items. (n.) The process which accomplishes this, esp. if it takes a very long time.

Source Code: (n.) a record of a programmer's thought for a period of time. A stream-of-consciousness novel or short story.

Spreadsheet: (n.) a way of forcing repeatable answers from insufficient data for superficial purposes. Also, a game played during office hours by bored or restless yuppies.

Stack: (n.) any area of memory which grows and eventually destroys both code and data. (v.) To place in such an area.

Standard: (n., adj.) a design target which manufacturers may embellish, improve upon, or ignore as they wish, so long as it can be used profitably in their advertising.

Transportable: (adj.) said of software - that which can be put on a new machine in less time than it took to write in the first place. Said of hardware - that which can theoretically be moved more than ten feet in one minute by some combination of machinery or explosives. The meanings are equivalent.

Truly relational: (adj.) relational, but where the paternity is indubitable.

TSR: (n.) acronym for Terminate and Stay Resident. A way of turning a useless computer with plenty of memory into a computer with no memory at all.

Turbo-: (prefix) computer software which uses air under pressure (supplied by a special fan) to achieve high performance.

User-friendly: (adj.) trivialized, slow, incapable, and boring. See: *Icon, Mouse*.

UNIX: (n., v.) a DOS which needs more memory than you have and run more slowly than you can bear. To UNIX: to grossly enlarge and slow down out of all proportion, esp. by using C.

User: (n.) one who knows from experience that programs cannot be trusted. A realist.

Vendor: (n.) a manufacturer's lackey.

Virtual: (adj.) emulated. See: Emulate.

Warranty: (n.) a list of vendor's promises with carefully-worded exceptions which cancel each of the promises in turn. See: *License*.

Windowing: (n., adj.) a way of making a large and easily-read display into many small, cluttered, and confusing ones.

Word Processor: (n.) A program which makes a $5,000 computer into a $250 typewriter. A computer game for beginning operators.

WORM: (n.) acronym for Write Once, Read Mangled. Used to describe a normally functioning computer disk of the very latest design.

XYZZY: (n.) a common user prompt.

Yarrow: (n.) kind of stalks used by computer diagnosticians when performing the ritual of the I Ching. See: Diagnostics.

Zaxxon: (n.) a sophisticated simulation and design program used by the brightest programmers to test the consistency of internal logic and memory. Management prefers to use games such as 'spreadsheet' for the same purpose.■

- Submitted by Phil Carter

Classifieds

The Latrobe Valley Computer Users Group does not condone the unauthorised sale or exchange in any manner of commercial software. Only public domain and shareware may be freely exchanged within the group.

Non-commercial ads are free to members. For commercial ads, a $4 charge per 1/6 page per issue applies. To place an ad, ring (051) 76 1730.

☞ For Sale ☜

Netcomm 1234SA Smart Modem - 2400/1200 1200/75 (Discovery). Auto dial, auto answer, auto ranging. Tone and pulse dialling. Comes with manuals, software and cables. $350 o.n.o. Ph. (051) 76 1730.

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AST RAMpage expanded memory card for IBM XT and compatibles. Comes with 256k, expandable to 2 megs. Also, Desqview multitasking software and AST expanded memory utilities and all manuals. $150 o.n.o. Phone Ian at (051) 92 4289.

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IBM Compatible XT - 640k RAM, 20 meg HD, 2 360k FDDs, CGA colour monitor, 4.77/8 mhz CPU, 101 key keyboard. $975 o.n.o. Ph. (051) 99 2298.

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Remember, due to the Holiday Season, there will be NO meeting in December. The next scheduled meeting will be January 28, 1992. Happy New Year to all!